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Daily Highlights

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THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Bosnia and Herzegovina, Nigeria, Libya, Mongolia, Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, Suriname and Tanzania among speakers today in General Assembly's general debate.

+ Senegal, Viet Nam, Gambia and Namibia among speakers in yesterday's general debate.

+ Secretary-General, in meeting with Foreign Minister of Guatemala, says he is ready to assist in resumption of peace talks between Guatemalan Government and URNG.

+ Non-Aggression Pact unanimously adopted by member States of Economic Community of Central African States meeting in Libreville, Gabon; Pact to come into force when ratified by seven of its 11 members.

+ United Nations Special Representative for Georgia begins discussions in Geneva with Abkhaz representatives; plans to begin talks soon with Georgian Government and with Russian representatives; warns that 200,000 refugees in Georgia face total deprivation and worsening cold.

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Alija Izetbegovic, President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, told the General Assembly today that an experiment in "political vivisection" was being performed on his country, and that the State and its people were dying. The London Conference had been the first stage of the experiment, followed by the Vance-Owen plan, which no one had tried to implement. Now, the Bosnian people were being asked to choose between a just defensive war and an unjust peace. A peace plan that legitimized genocide and promoted ethnic partition would sow the seeds of new aggression; a plan that did not provide for a viable Bosnian State or measures for real implementation would not lead to peace, he warned.

The Bosnian Parliament's provisional acceptance of the plan depended on certain adjustments, he stated. The Bosnian Republic in the proposed Union of the Republics of Bosnia and Herzegovina must be geographically, economically,

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politically and defensively viable; aggressor forces must surrender control of territories where they had slaughtered and expelled civilians; and the agreement must contain guarantees for implementation by the States and organizations which would enforce the peace. If the international community would not implement the plan, the Bosnian people must be allowed to arm and defend themselves. The Security Council could not escape its responsibilities when one party was being pressured with the threat of genocide, he stressed.

The President called attention to the impending humanitarian tragedy in his country, and went on to say that United Nations involvement there had been the antithesis of clarity of objective and firmness of resolve. The Organization's half-heartedness and prideful insistence that it was getting the job done might go down in history as the main reasons for the country's destruction. The United Nations must follow through on its intervention or rescind that intervention; it could not continue with its present policy, which made it an accomplice in the destruction of the Bosnian people, he said.

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Chief Ernest Shonekan, Head of State of Nigeria and Commander-in-Chief of its Armed Forces, told the General Assembly this afternoon that Nigerians understood and appreciated the concern shown by the international community over recent political events in their country, given that democratization had become a major component of the emerging new world order. He assured the Assembly that they were working very hard to find a just and generally acceptable solution to the problem. Only yesterday, he said, he had inaugurated a high-powered Commission of Eminent Persons to look into the circumstances that lead to the annulment of the 12 June presidential election and to report back within 60 days.

He congratulated South African leaders, both black and white, on the statesmanlike way they had conducted the negotiations that led to the establishment of the Transitional Executive Council. He said Nigeria would respond immediately to Nelson Mandela's call for economic cooperation with South Africa. While urging Member States to support the Organization's ever-increasing peace-keeping efforts, he stressed that the United Nations must direct its operations in a manner that did not jeopardize its integrity or expose the peace-keepers to avoidable danger. He said the national trauma occasioned by the loss of lives while on United Nations peace-keeping missions gave rise to anxieties and doubts, but Nigeria would continue to participate in those operations. It was in that spirit of service, he stated, that his country was seeking election to the Security Council this year, and he asked the Members to support its candidature.

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Omar Mustafa Al-Muntasser, Secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International of the Libyan Arab Jamahariya, this morning called on the General Assembly to recognise his country's efforts to resolve the dispute involving the two suspects in the Pan American and UTA bombing incidents, and to urge the Security Council to immediately lift its

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sanctions against Libya. France, Britain and the United States had pressured the Council into dealing with the issue under Chapter VII of the Charter, which did not apply in this case, he said, given that Libya had neither threatened nor jeopardized international peace and security. His Government had accepted the Secretary-General's reply to its recent communication on the matter and all that remained now was to convince the suspects to submit themselves to the Scottish judiciary. Libya was urging them to do so, he said.

He said his country had supported the call for the establishment of nuclear weapon-free zones, including the proposal by Egypt calling for the Middle East to be made an area free of weapons of mass destruction. Libya had asked the United Nations to take the necessary measures to destroy nuclear, bacteriological, chemical and other weapons of mass destruction, such as ballistic missiles, and to prohibit and criminalise the development, possession and use of all such weapons.

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Tserenpiliin Gombosuren, Mongolia's Minister for External Relations, told the General Assembly today that the new democracies were making progress despite the formidable difficulties of transition, and he called attention to recent events in the Russian Federation. He expressed confidence that the democratic forces led by President Boris Yeltsin would succeed in their endeavours. Mongolia was entering its fourth year of democratic reforms but faced special difficulties as an under-developed, landlocked country highly vulnerable to natural disasters. Mongolia also had to deal with spiritual renewal as well, as its people had been forced to abandon centuries-old traditions and their cultural heritage during the years of the socialist experiment.

It was time to address the issue of economic disparities between North and South and to conclude the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks, he continued. Mongolia welcomed the meeting of the Chairmen of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of Seven industrialized countries in Tokyo last July, which represented a first step towards relaunching the North-South Dialogue. He went on to say that grants and soft loans from donor governments had helped to alleviate Mongolia's difficulties and provided a basis for future development. Mongolia wanted to attract private-sector investment and to be actively involved in regional economic cooperation, and hoped to become a member of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Organization.

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The Secretary for Foreign Affairs of the Philippines, Roberto R. Romulo, this morning hailed the "amazing transformation" that had radically altered the world's political landscape in the past year. It was exemplified, he told the General Assembly, by developments in two of the major preoccupations that had exercised the Assembly for decades, the system of apartheid in South

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Africa and the problem of Palestine. He also welcomed the "triumph" of the Cambodian people, together with the United Nations and the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), in establishing a democratic Government.

The old scourges that still confronted mankind -- mass poverty, external debt, environmental damage and illicit drugs -- would be more effectively addressed, he said, if people were placed at the centre of development and international cooperation. Focusing on the situation of women, he said that in situations of conflict, women and children were the most tragic victims because of their inherent vulnerability. Similarly, he continued, in situations of extreme poverty, women -- particularly migrant workers -- were the most vulnerable to abuse. He called on the Assembly to pay attention to the condition of women, particularly of female migrant workers, and asked Governments to stop treating migrant workers as commodities, subject to the law of supply and demand.

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Ednan Karabayev, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kyrgyzstan, told the General Assembly today his country was trying to find its place in a new world. In doing so, it believed in pluralism, the establishment of a market economy, a policy of self-reliance aimed at protecting the vulnerable, providing legal safeguards for all citizens and for the State itself, religious tolerance, and the priority of human rights and the individual's right to happiness. However, the country lacked energy resources and was experiencing certain difficulties in the social and economic sphere. There was a shortage of medicines and many people did not have a balanced diet. Young people from rural areas often lacked skills which would allow them to contribute to the economy. Kyrgyzstan needed investment, he said, citing the example of the Marshall Plan.

The Foreign Minister stressed the importance of religous tolerance, and said a universal convention on freedom of religion could make a contribution to international peace and security. He also spoke of the need to establish a system of collective security in Asia, and expressed support for proposals in that regard made by previous speakers in the general debate. However, he said that such a system could not be achieved quickly, and suggested that the Secretary-General might conduct a study of the issue.

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Subhas Ch. Mungra, the Foreign Minister of Suriname, said in the general debate today that it was no easy task to achieve economic recovery and further development while safeguarding political stability. The process could entail increased poverty and serious social disruption, he warned. The divergence between Suriname's views on the proper way to implement the adjustment programme and the views of donors had created great pressure on policy. The failure of adjustment programmes in many countries undoubtedly related to a perception which overlooked the reality facing developing countries at present, and which ignored the real aspirations of humankind.

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He said that in 1992 his country and The Netherlands had signed a Framework Treaty providing for substantial support for development in Suriname. The cooperation arising from that agreement had helped consolidate the restored democracy in his country, strengthening its constitutionality, aiding the protection of human rights and establishing and maintaining peace after the armed struggle in the interior ended. However, he added, questions had arisen as to The Netherlands' support for the Suriname's economic recovery, and thus about its motives for that cooperation.

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Joseph Rwegasira, Tanzania's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, told the General Assembly today that the credibility and moral authority of the United Nations had been severely damaged by its inability to respond to the grave challenge posed by Jonas Savimbi, leader of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Had the Organization heeded the call for an adequate presence in Angola, it was unlikely that Mr. Savimbi would have embarked on his "adventure", which was now tearing the country apart. He went on to say that the failure of the United Nations to offer any hope to the Bosnian Muslims was one of the greatest tragedies of our time. The arms embargo against Bosnia and Herzegovina should be lifted to enable its people to defend themselves.

The Foreign Minister welcomed the initiative taken by some donor countries to tackle the debt crisis by writing off some of the debts of the least developed countries. Apart from debt relief measures, Africa needed a fresh infusion of finance to accelerate economic growth. He also welcomed Japan's iniatiative to organize, in collaboration with the United Nations and the Global Coalition for Africa, the Tokyo International Conference on African Development. He expressed the hope that the Conference would yield concrete recommendations on measures to assist Africa and would remind the international community of the need to help the continent.

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Moustapha Niasse, Senegal's Minister for Foreign Affairs, told the General Assembly yesterday that the United Nations should be restructured to meet the challenges of a changed world. The world economy had lost its balance in a manner which increasingly jeopardized international peace. The salvation of mankind lay in solidarity, friendship and cooperation among peoples. It was fortunate that France, among other industrialized countries, had reaffirmed the importance of addressing the needs of the developing countries in order to ensure international peace and security, he said.

The Foreign Minister stressed that Senegal would remain committed to the strengthening of international peace and security, which could only be guaranteed if all nations complied with the rule of law in their relations with other States. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the people were the victims of genocide. In Angola, the Bicesse Accords seemed to have collapsed, with the positions of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) regarding last year's elections, plunging the nation into renewed conflict.

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He commended the United Nations operation in Somalia, although much remained to be done there to restore a viable State.

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Phan Van Khai, First Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam, told the General Assembly yesterday that his country, which had lived through protracted, devastating wars, was undertaking a process of renewal. Located in the most dynamic region of development in the world, it had both opportunities and challenges stemming from its specific historical circumstances, natural conditions and position in the world. It had to overcome poverty and underdevelopment and join the mainstream of progress in the region. The only way to do so was to tap all domestic resources and to expand international cooperation. The process of renewal focused on the economic field with a view to developing a market economy. He thanked the United Nations system and the many Governments and non-governmental organizations which had provided development and humanitarian assistance to his country.

Viet Nam was ready to normalize relations with the United States on the basis of equality, mutual respect and without any preconditions, he continued. That would meet the aspirations and interests of both countries and would serve peace, stability, cooperation and development in the region and around the world. Viet Nam was deeply sympathetic to the sentiments of American families with loved ones missing in the war, and had cooperated, was cooperating and would countinue to cooperate with the American Government and people regarding those missing in action. It was a purely humanitarian issue, he stressed.

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Omar Sey, Minister for External Affairs of the Gambia, told the General Assembly yesterday that the issue of human rights needed to be fully addressed in all its composite parts. Political and civil rights went hand in hand with economic, social and cultural rights. The problems of poverty, hunger and illiteracy, which had characterized developing countries, constituted a serious threat to the stability and respect of political rights in those countries. He supported the creation of a high commissioner for human rights. Among the difficulties facing developing countries was the problem of external debt, which constituted a major obstacle to development. In sub-Saharan Africa the debt stock had increased to $185 billion, the equivalent of 110 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). One third of Africa's total export earnings went to developed countries to service debts. A concerted and innovative international effort was needed to find a permanent solution to the problem.

While Africa's indebtedness had continued, agricultural and industrial production had declined, he said. The problem was aggravated by serious inflation, which had contributed to a steep decline in domestic savings and investment. Increased direct foreign investment was crucial for long-term improvement of Africa's economic situation, as was the removal of unfair trade practices. He expressed the hope that an early conclusion of the Uruguay

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Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks would address the thorny issue of market access, which was of major concern to developing countries.

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Theo-Ben Gurirab, Namibia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, said yesterday that if the Security Council was to be a credible organ of the United Nations, it must fulfil the expectations of a changing and demanding world. The membership of the Security Council should be increased through the addition of more permanent and non-permanent members on an equitable geographical basis. Africa needed an effective presence on the Council, as did Asia and Latin America. The outmoded and undemocratic veto power should be abolished. There was also a compelling need to restructure the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. "Humanity is yearning for a peaceful, just and prosperous world," he said. Accordingly, Namibia envisaged a meaningful partnership between the Secretaries-General of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in conflict resolution and humanitarian relief operations in Africa.

The Foreign Minister called on the people of South Africa, with the assistance of the international community, to put an immediate end to the ever-escalating violence. He supported Nelson Mandela's call for the lifting of economic sanctions against South Africa, and the restoration of full diplomatic relations with South Africa following the installation of an elected government of national unity. The matter of Walvis Bay and the offshore islands was finally being resolved, he said. On 28 February 1994, their transfer and reintegration would take place, marking completion of the decolonization of Namibia and its unification as a nation.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met yesterday with the Foreign Minister of Guatemala, Arturo Fajardo Maldonado, who presented his Government's plan for the establishment of a national dialogue, measures to address pressing social needs, and a proposed revised framework for peace negotiations with the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG).

The Foreign Minister requested the Secretary-General's assistance in promoting a meeting with the URNG, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General expressed his continued willingness to help the parties resume the peace talks as soon as possible.

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A Non-Aggression Pact among the 11 member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has been unanimously adopted at the Ministerial Meeting of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa being held in Libreville, Gabon. The Pact will come into force when ratified by seven of the members.

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Included in the Pact is a commitment by the Committee's members (Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe and Zaire) not to resort to the threat or use of force in inter-state relations, and to respect the territorial integrity and independence of other member States in accordance with the Charters of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity (OAU).

Each member State also pledges not to commit, encourage or support acts of hostility or aggression against the territorial integrity and independence of other member States and to prevent such acts from being carried out by foreigners on their territory. Should differences occur among member States, the Pact provides for recourse to the relevant mechanisms of ECCAS, the OAU and the United Nations, as appropriate.

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The United Nations Special Representative for Georgia, Ambassador Edward Brunner, said in Geneva today that tensions were too high at the moment to convene a peace conference on the situation in the Abkhaz region. Ambassador Brunner told journalists in Geneva that he began discussions with the Abkhaz representatives yesterday. He said he hoped to begin talks in the near future with the Georgian Government and to bring in Russian representatives as well. The Special Representative said he recognized that Russia had a legitimate interest in stability in the Caucasus region, and that it would be difficult to find a durable solution without active Russian participation.

Meanwhile, Ambassador Brunner said the humanitarian situation was of great concern both in the Abkhaz region and elsewhere in Georgia, with over 200,000 refugees enduring complete deprivation. He said it was beginning to become very cold, and a large number of refugees were stranded high up in inaccessible mountainous regions.

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